Met Office

NEWS

Research to help hay fever and asthma sufferers

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The medical and research community continually look to improve their understanding of pollen and to then disseminate their learnings to the public via the media and patient organisations.

The aim is to help sufferers understand their symptoms, avoid exposure and manage medication where appropriate.

The Met Office is working in partnership with several universities and Public Health England (PHE) in researching various aspects of pollen, with three main projects currently taking place.

PollerGEN research into grass pollen

We're involved in research with several partner universities to identify which of the 150 grass pollens most of us are allergic to. We hope this will provide allergy sufferers with more precise information about the types of grass pollens affecting them and when, so they can take appropriate action. It may also lead to solutions in management of hay fever and asthma. For example, this might include town planners and developers planting grass types that are less likely to affect the public.

PollerGEN is comprised of partners from Bangor University, Aberystwyth University, University of Exeter, University of Worcester and University of Sydney.

Pollen and thunderstorm asthma

We're also working with the Health Protection Research Unit in Environmental Change and Health (HPRU ECH) to research the significance of pollen to thunderstorm asthma as well as the impact of natural environment pollen on asthma. Partners include UCL, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University of Exeter Medical School and Public Health England

Spores and asthma

The Met Office is facilitating UK participation in the Global Spore Sampling Network (GSSN), organised by the University of Helsinki, which is looking into the effect of spores on asthma.

Species maps

Following on from a joint Met Office/Public Health England (PHE project), which produced species location maps of key allergenic plants for Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, further research has now expanded these maps for the whole of the UK.

The maps show the locations of key allergenic plants. They will be used by health researchers to study impacts of plants with allergenic pollen on hospital admissions for respiratory conditions, and also provide information to local authorities and healthcare practitioners as well as being a useful tool to assist self-management or treatment of allergy sufferers.

It ‘s hoped that in the future these more detailed source maps can be used, alongside wind direction and precipitation patterns to provide more detailed and local warnings to sufferers, which pollen is impacting their area and in what concentrations.

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